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OPINION

OPINION: There's a crisis in America's early childhood workforce

November 18, 2024 . 1:00 PM — 2 min read

Nursery school teachers work with children. COURTESY PHOTO/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/VINCENZO MAINARDI

The following opinion column was submitted by Kimberly Higgins:

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Everywhere in America, parents send their children off to preschool with a sense of trust. They rely on early childhood educators (ECE) to help their children grow, learn, and prepare for the challenges of the future.

Do they know the ECE workforce in America is in crisis? The challenges facing ECE are numerous, but they can be broken down into three main issues: underfunding, underappreciation, and an unsustainable compensation structure.

Underfunding

One of the primary issues is the underfunding of ECE. Evidence shows the first five years of a child's life are critical to their long-term academic and social success. But public investment in ECE is far behind that of K-12 education. This means the quality of care is often dependent on what families can afford rather than what children need.

Underappreciation

Unlike teachers in K-12 schools, ECE receive little recognition or appreciation from society.

Despite their critical role in child development, the status of ECE remains disturbingly low. I would say, when society fails to recognize the value of ECE, it sends a message that early educators and their work are expendable and this affects morale and retention.

This is one of the many issues that make it difficult for our field to hire and retain qualified staff.

Unsustainable compensation structure

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Perhaps the most significant issue in the early childhood workforce is compensation. As of recent data, the median wage for childcare workers in Massachusetts is approximately $16 to $17 per hour. K-12 schools benefit from unions and much higher salaries.

Why are those who work with our youngest left without the same support? Many early childhood educators earn less than those in other fields that require little to no education, such as retail workers or fast-food employees.

This is another reason why our field is crumbling. Classrooms sit empty because we cannot fill them with qualified teachers.

Contact us with your story ideas: editor@WinchesterNews.org!

The solution to this crisis, to me, seems clear. We must commit to reforming the early childhood workforce in a way that acknowledges the vital role these educators play in our society.

First and foremost, we need an increase in public investment in ECE. This includes funding for early childhood programs that ensure access to high-quality care for all families, regardless of income. This could take the form of subsidies for parents or investments in childcare infrastructure.

Second, we need to elevate the profession of early childhood education. This means improving the status of early educators through better compensation, professional development, and more opportunities for career advancement.

States and federal agencies should work to develop a system for childhood educators — one that includes improved wages, afford

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higher education options, and ongoing mentorship.

Massachusetts is an example of how this can and is being done: with investments into the schools and creating clear pathways for degrees in our field. Massachusetts will hopefully be a leader for other states.

— *Kimberly Higgins is the owner of Preschool Social Academy in Winchester.*

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OPINION

Salvation Army thanks Winchester for Red Kettle Campaign support

To the Editor: As we begin 2026, The Salvation Army Massachusetts Division would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the residents, businesses, and volunteers in the Winchester area who supported the 2025 Red Kettle Campaign. Your generosity

OPINION

Yes, Virginia...There is a Santa Claus

Editor's Note: Francis P. Church's editorial, "Yes Virginia, There is a Santa Claus" first appeared in The New York Sun in 1897, and was reprinted annually until 1949 when the paper went out of business. When it first appeared, it was an immed and became one of

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and kindness during the holiday season brought comfort, hope, and tangible support

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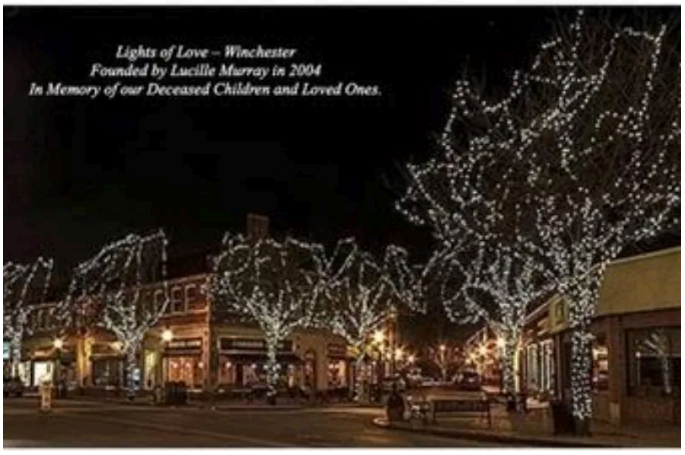

OPINION

'Lights of Love' in Winchester looking for donations this holiday season

Dear friends and supporters: My husband and I founded the "Lights of Love" – Winchester in 2004. For more than two decades, the "Lights of Love" has illuminated our Town Center and downtown area all year round – a glowing tribute in memory of our deceased children, family members and friends whose

December 9, 2025

OPINION

The return of the winter paunch is nothing to worry about — Just ask any squirrel

Over the past couple of weeks there's been a familiar seasonal sighting around our Dublin house. The object in question usually appears when I'm stepping into the shower or getting ready for bed, and it's a 100% reliable sign that summer and autumn have ended and colder

STEVE CORONELLA | FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH

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EVENTS

Celebrate Women's History Month with Girls Leading Change

The following was submitted by the Network for Social Justice: To mark Women's History Month and International Women's Day in 2026, the Network for Social Justice is collaborating with club leaders from Winchester High School and members of the Community Health team from La Colaborativa in Chelsea and

March 4, 2026

NEWS

Winchester School Committee candidates bring contrasting backgrounds to Thursday forum

Two candidates for Winchester's School Committee will face voters at a forum as the district navigates a new literacy curriculum, budget pressures and questions about student mental health. Heather von Mering and John Bellaire are competing for an open seat on the School Committee, which oversees a budget von

WILL DOWD | STAFF WRITER

March 4, 2026

FEATURES

'Chicago: Teen Edition' dances onto the Winchester High School stage

By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester

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Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents 'Syldason: You Are Welcome Here'

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On

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High School presents "Chicago: Teen Edition," a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. This iconic production is set in the 1920s. Performances will take place on March 13 and 14

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS
March 4, 2026

Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

March 4, 2026

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